

# Revenant narratives/literary hauntings: on the spectral geography of the Japanese metropolis

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## Introduction

Since at least the mid-nineteen nineties, geographers have employed the language of ghosts, haunting and the supernatural to describe the affective qualities of urban environments (Mayerfeld Bell 1997; Degen and Hetherington 2001; Pinder 2001; Pile 2005). This spectral or ‘spectro-geography’ (Maddern and Adey 2008) has largely focused on the ways in which revenant narratives become inscribed in the fabric of urban environments, working to haunt cities and their inhabitants. Existing geographical studies have viewed spectrality from a predominantly figurative perspective, using the language of haunting to articulate the ghostliness of urban memory and the haunting qualities of city spaces (Edensor 2005; Till 2005). However, they have frequently overlooked the significance of the supernatural in the physical and spiritual production of urban geographies. Cities make for a rich topology of ghostly interventions, providing sites and spaces where absence and loss can be sensed, observed, and conjured into performance through an engagement with urban memory and spectral traces of the past. But haunting is not a purely aesthetic process, neither is it simply an emotional response to the built environment; rather, haunting conveys a contingent part of the physical urban landscape, one that remains intrinsic to our experience of place and time. Certainly, spectral geography provides a method for dealing with history, a way to reflect on anachronic reverberations across space and time. However, as Pile (2005) sets out in his *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life*, the supernatural speaks to more than just ghosts: urban spaces are not only haunted, but magical, vampiric, and oneiric. Borrowing the term from Walter Benjamin’s unfinished *Arcades Projects* ([1927-40] 1999) — itself something of a haunted project— from the early twentieth century ‘phantasmagoria’ underpins Pile’s analysis of urban space, articulating the myriad entities which ‘pass through the lives of city dwellers, creating an immediate experience that looks for all the world like a procession of dream-like and ghost-like figures’ (165). Pile suggests that cities exist in various phantasmagoric states, and as such, each city requires a different form of ‘space work’, an

emotional unpacking of ‘the social and psychological processes that combine to make up its differentiated spaces’ (2005: 175). Pile’s phantasmagorias utilise the supernatural as a means to communicate the experientiality and utopic potential of urban spaces: ‘In the phantasmagorias of city life,’ he writes, ‘there are always possibilities for dreaming the real city anew’ (182).

Tokyo is a city where this magical potential has been realised, where the phantasmagoric is hardwired into its urban fabric. While the Japanese capital is replete with haunting narratives of trauma and loss - having experienced numerous catastrophic fires and earthquakes as well as suffering brutal US air strikes during the Pacific War - the origins of this supernatural city, however, lie in *Onmyōdō*, a Japanese rendering of Buddhist mysticism and superstition largely imported from China and developed from *feng shui*. Tokyo is a city that has literally been built with the supernatural in mind: from its very founding, protective temples were constructed to ward off evil in the inauspicious northeast and southwest quarters, and buildings and streets were developed with mechanisms designed to counter the negative effects of unlucky directions and malign energies. Having been constructed and rooted so deeply in folkloric narrative and superstition, Tokyo remains saturated with tales of the supernatural, many of which are tied to the spatial organisation and material geography of the city, and thus continue to affect experiences of its modern urban environment. The magical geometry through which Tokyo was envisioned and then formed, together with its literal history of death, disaster, and disorienting rapid development, have been imagined in the works of writers both from Japan and abroad, working simultaneously to produce a supernatural spatiality. These narratives – literary, historical, folkloric – are inextricable from the experience of the city and its material form (landmarks, architecture, social figures, infrastructure, etc.) and work synchronously to form what Sheila Hones terms an ‘interspatiality’: the ‘multidirectional textual-social-spatial interconnectivity’ concerning geographies internal, between, and external to (literary) narratives (2022a: 16). Opening with a discussion of spectral geography and interspatiality, the article will then provide an examination of the various ways in which spectral narratives inflect, memorialise, and shape Tokyo.

## **Ghostly Valencies: spectrality and interspatiality**

At the turn of the new millennium a growing interest in affect, memory, and trauma within the humanities resulted in what Roger Luckhurst named the ‘spectral turn’ (Luckhurst 2002). This ‘turn’, as Luckhurst termed it, made possible a shift in analytic focus from materiality to immateriality, that is to say, a moving away from a preoccupation with presence and positivism in favour of absence and spectrality. The spectral turn emerged as a conceptual response to what were, at the time, two newly evolving strands of thought in Western academic practice. Firstly, the ‘endist’ speculation of late twentieth century philosophy (see, for example, Jameson 1992, 1999; Kojève 1980; Lyotard 1984), which prophesied the ‘end of history’ (Fukuyama 1989), had a profound effect on the way scholars approached the analysis of culture and temporality, particularly where matters of memory, loss, and mourning were concerned. Secondly, the 1993 publication of Jacques Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx*, which saw the initiation of ‘hauntology’, an analytical framework capable of examining the spectro-politics of Western liberal democracy (itself haunted by the lingering spectre of Marx and communism), introduced the language of spectrality to Western academic analysis. Taken together, these two spectrally imbued approaches to social, cultural, and political analysis formed the foundation on which Western academia’s subsequent conjuration of (largely figurative) ghosts took place. It is worth noting here that the spectral turn was both culturally and geographically specific. Outside of its Western context, spectrality never emerged as a tool for social, cultural or political analysis, including Japan, where it remains relatively unknown.

Geographers, in particular, took up the language of spectrality and haunting in their analyses of place and space to describe the tension(s) between absence and presence in experiences of the lived environment, an area of research which came to be known as spectro or spectral geography. These spectral geographic writings were heavily influenced by Derrida’s *hauntology* – a portmanteau of ‘haunt’ and ‘ontology’ (the philosophical enquiry into *being*). Following Michael Mayerfeld Bell’s 1997 article ‘Ghosts of Place’ in *Theory and Society*, and Avery Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, published the same year, several geographical examinations of the role of spatial haunting began to emerge in the early years of the new millennium, starting with a 2001 special issue of the journal *Space and Culture* on ‘Spatial Hauntings,’ edited by Monica Degen and Kevin Hetherington.

David Inglis and Mary Holmes’ study of ghosts and regional tourism in *Annals of Tourism Research* continued this geographical engagement with haunting, reflecting on the

ways in which ghosts have been appropriated by the Scottish tourism industry (2003: 57). A 2005 session at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference organised by Jo Frances Maddern and Peter Adey, themed around Derrida's 'spectro politics', culminated in a special issue of the journal *cultural geographies* on 'spectro-geographies' (Maddern and Adey 2008). This special issue featured geographers engaging not only with themes of political and spatial haunting, but also the haunting of literary space, seen, for example, in David Matless' examination of the spectral landscapes of Mary Butts (Matless 2008). Independent of this special issue of *cultural geographies*, John Wylie published an analysis of spectral geography in the writings of W.G. Sebald in the same journal during the previous year, observing that '[t]he spectral not only displaces place and self through the freight of ghostly memories; it works to displace the present from itself' (2007: 172). Around the same time, several monograph-length geographic explorations of haunting, memory, and affect in the cityscape began to emerge and were instrumental in paving the way for what would later become referred to collectively as 'spectral geography'. Examples include Tim Edensor's *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality* (2005), Karen Till's *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (2005), and Steve Pile's *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life* (2005). These cultural, urban, and post-phenomenological spectral geographical studies demonstrate how '[b]odily senses, materials, and rhythms are some of the key aspects that co-constitute our urban experience' (Cheng 2014: 212), emphasising the roles of affect and agency in the shaping of human-geographical encounters.

A series of articles on affect, spectrality, the monstrous, and space by Julian Holloway (2006, 2010, 2017) have worked to further develop spectral geography, cementing its place as an area of interest for contemporary human geographers. Holloway is rare among geographers in applying spectral geography to the analysis of purportedly real hauntings and haunted spaces, such as the case of Gef the Talking Mongoose, an entity which allegedly plagued a family living on the Isle of Man in the 1930s. Particularly relevant to the approach taken in *this* paper is Holloway's geographical analysis of 'legend tripping' and ghost story narratives in British cities, which focuses on the way spectral narratives and ostension are used by tour guides to engage tourists with the materiality and heritage of supernatural city spaces in specific ways, usually to reveal the multi-coded layering of the occulted past:

the performance of narratives and tales at spatial interstices with particular architectural framings and atmospheres enacts a relational assemblage of teller and listener where a

disposition and willingness to be enchanted, comprising of a sense of wonder and awareness of entertaining deceit, leads to playful practices of engrossing possibility and indeterminate meaning. (634)

It is Holloway's emphasis on narrative and affect and their intertwining with urban materiality that I wish to emphasise in my later discussion of supernatural Tokyo.

Recent work in the interdiscipline of literary geography has paid attention to the ways in which folkloric narratives, texts, and spaces intersect, collide, co-exist, and co-produce spatialities – amalgamations of social and physical space and the various actors contained (or imagined) within them. Geographers have long wrestled with their articulations of spatial types – real/imagined, literary/actual-world, physical/social, etc., demonstrating the difficulty in conceiving of and working with space as a unified concept. The slipperiness of such terminology has until only recently posed a particular issue for literary geographers, whose research rests upon the ‘combining and connecting of work in human geography and in literary studies [...] bringing together aims and methods from the humanities and social sciences’ (Hones 2022b:1), and often does so through relational approaches to space. In a short article for *Literary Geographies*, Sheila Hones tackles this problem head on, setting out the totalising concept of ‘interspatiality’. Hones combines the geographical theory of spatiality with the literary concept of intertextuality, which, she suggests, ‘might productively generate the interdisciplinary idea of interspatiality, thereby naming and enabling engagement with the dynamic plurality of texts, spaces, places, authors, readers and other agents which is the implied subject of much current work in literary geography’ (2022a: 17). Thurgill's recent examination of the interconnectedness between literary and actual-world narratives and urban space takes up Hones' interspatiality to show how folkloric narratives, ‘regardless of form or subject, engender interspatiality; destabilising the rigidity of any pre-supposed ontological divides between imagined and actual-world space to reveal a shared geography that is at once both *present* and *absent*’ (2022: 13). A similar framework will be used in the discussion below, which sets out the ways in which supernatural Tokyo exists as an ‘interspatiality’ – a totality of spatiality rendered possible through the temporo-spatial interconnecting and interpenetrating of narratives, people, and places. In what follows, then, I present the various spectral narratives of Tokyo as they are experienced in person: as a complex of affective social, historical, and spiritual layers that continuously fold *into* and *out of* the haunted cityscape. By doing so, it becomes possible to show the ways in which supernaturalism is woven into the very fabric of

the Japanese metropolis, demonstrating the power of such magical thinking in both the production and experience of Tokyo's urban spaces.

### **Ghostly Foundations: spectro-spatial arrangements**

Cities, regardless of location or culture, are haunted environments, where the present topography is punctured, torn, and ruptured by its past. Tokyo, despite its depiction as a hypermodern network of bullet trains, neon lights, and vertiginous architectural forms, is a city defined by its connections to history. The spatial organisation of modern-day Tokyo has been significantly influenced by ancient belief systems and yet, despite it being a centuries-old site of human habitation, one must look carefully to find any obvious traces of the city's deep history. As Jinnai Hidenobu (1995) comments in his *Tokyo: A Spatial Anthropology*, Tokyo 'is an anomaly among the capital cities of the world [...] it's become difficult here to find a house that's even a century old' (1). Having been twice almost entirely destroyed, first by the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 and then again by allied bombing during the Pacific War (1941-1945), what exists now is the result of waves of rapid development and widespread restructuring. Of course, such devastation brings with it its own spectral narratives of loss, grief, and mourning, but to understand Tokyo as a supernatural 'interspatiality', however, it is necessary to go further back into the city's past.

While a number of small settlements had previously existed in the area which Tokyo now occupies, it was the construction of Edo and its castle in the early seventeenth century that first saw the founding of a dedicated urban space in the region. Having won a series of strategic battles before going on to form the Tokugawa shogunate —a military-led, feudal system of governance that maintained control of Japan for more than two and a half centuries—, Tokugawa Ieyasu settled on the area of Musashino in the east of Japan's main island, Honshu, as the site for his seat of power (Jinnai 1995; Screech 2020). While Edo was built in a bay, latticed by rivers, and bordered by mountains, the surrounding area of Musashino had been something of a *terra incognita* prior to Ieyasu's arrival, with the 'no' of Musashino denoting an area of moors and nothingness. As Timon Screech (2008) describes, 'the nothingness of Musashi was its most famous characteristic' (71). The decision to build a new city in this space of apparent absence was, however, strategic: the moorlands and plains around the site of Edo were not necessarily regarded in entirely negative terms, but rather more as liminal spaces in

which ‘it was possible to mediate with another world, religiously’ (Screech 2008: 72). The very selection of Edo’s site was, then, based on an understanding of the physical landscape as spiritually inflected. From its foundation, Edo was a strategic space through which Ieyasu could not only govern his lands, but where he could literarily construct a site to ‘represent order out of chaos, and the perfection of human life under the gyration of the heavens’ (79). Wanting to ensure safety and prosperity for the new city, Ieyasu enlisted the help of the Buddhist monk Tenkai to help with the spatio-spiritual organisation of Edo. Working with the geomantic systems of *hōgaku* and *onmyōdo*, Japanese variants of the ancient Chinese practice of *feng shui*, Tenkai organised Edo in a way that channelled sacred energy (*ki*) through the city and offered spiritual protection in the northeast and southwest corners.

*Hōgaku*, literally ‘corners and directions,’ and *Onmyōdō* (the ‘Way of Yin and Yang’) are spiritual systems that rely on a knowledge of astronomy, divination, and magic, and were strategically used to organise Edo in such a way that particular sacred alignments were followed, positive energy appropriately conducted, and negative or demonic forces repelled. This geo-philosophical understanding of topographical and spatial good fortune underpins decisions about the location and orientation of cities, settlements, buildings, cemeteries, etc. throughout East Asian cultures (Watanabe 1990). While the belief systems held by Tenkai were complex and required an intimate understanding of natural and sacred forces, their use in the mapping out of Edo can be roughly seen to function in two ways: [1] the strategic placement of temples (and later shrines) in the inauspicious quarters facing *kimon*, ‘the demon gate’, in the northeast and *urakimon*, ‘the demon’s backgate’, in the southwest, and [2] the construction of the city around rivers and roads that acted as vectors for the unrestricted flow of *ki* (spiritual energy). Where *feng shui*’s use in architectural practice has received significant scholarly attention (see, for example, Knapp 1986; Tam et al 1999; Bramble 2003; Mak and Ng 2005), little research has been conducted (in English) on the use of *hōgaku* in city planning (Kalland 1996), either historically or regarding contemporary cities. Yet an examination of *hōgaku* and *onmyōdo*’s role in the planning of Edo reveals the way in which supernaturalism might be folded into the very production of city spaces to improve prosperity, power, and prominence, exposing where their resonances can still be sensed in the modern city. Bergman notes that, in contrast to the West,

[Asian] spiritual and religious systems have developed over the course of history and have served as influencing factors on the places they grow out of. These systems are

still highly significant for the locations that people chose to inhabit: their environment and for how culture makes itself home in nature. (2009: 147).

Pile observes how *feng shui* has been used in the spatial design and placement of buildings in Singapore and other Asian cities influenced by China and Chinese cultural practices. In Edo, Tenkai arranged the city according to the four cardinal directions (North, East, South, West) and their connections to the gods, then used this same geomantic imaginary to fix the position of large temple complexes in the northeast and southwest of the city, protecting the settlement from negative energies in magical and religious ways (Matsui 2014).

Ieyasu built his castle, the seat of power for the Tokugawa shogunate, facing south, which is of spiritual significance as both symbolically and literally the ruler's face would be 'blessed' by sunlight. However, this left Edo and its castle exposed to attack from the unobserved north and northeast. While the threat was very much an existential one, taking care of the flow of *ki* from this unlucky direction ensured complete spiritual protection. A small temple already existed in the village of Asakusa, conveniently located northeast of Edo. It is said the temple was founded after two fishermen pulled a mysterious Buddhist Kannon statue from the bay. The men are said to have taken the statue back to land after numerous unsuccessful attempts to throw it back in the water, whereafter it would almost immediately find its way back into their nets (Screech 2020). While the original temple was small and generally unknown, Ieyasu instructed Tenkai to enlarge the complex and build a grand structure. The temple is known today as Sensō-ji: the Kannon statue on which it was founded is hidden from public view and is one of Japan's many 'hidden Buddhas' (*hibutsu*), which are rarely, if ever, seen (Screech 2020). Not content with enlisting an existing temple in his spiritual defences, Tenkai was commanded by Ieyasu to design an entirely new complex in the area now known as Ueno (the north moors/plains). This second temple, named Kan'ei-ji, was built atop of one of Edo's seven sacred mounds, and provided the city and the shogunate with an impressive spiritual defence mechanism, one that would have been clearly visible throughout the city. To the southwest, Zojō-ji temple was built to alleviate the impact of any corrupt energy drawn to this inauspicious direction (Miyamoto 2001). Further temples were strategically placed to ward off evil at varying sites of perceived uncleanness throughout the city, such as cemeteries and execution grounds.

The second geomantic defence utilised was the construction of Edo around the Sumida River. As energy (both positive and negative) was believed to enter from the northeast, it



required a conduit through which to be flushed through the city before exiting at the southwest boundary. Such was the direction in which energy was considered to pass through the human body: cities, as living systems, should thus reflect the body and its orifices in their spatial arrangement. While the Sumida did not flow exactly from northeast to southwest, it was deemed close enough to site a city there. The Sumida was too wide to be canalised and coerced into the ‘correct’ spiritual direction, so to further aid the flow of *ki* Tenkai designed a large thoroughfare that passed diagonally through Edo (Miyamoto 2001; Hijikata 2021). While it is known from contemporary accounts that such a street existed, it was deemed far too sacred to be named by humans. Together with temple complexes and the Sumida River, this route through Edo provided a powerful corridor for *ki*, ensuring its safe distribution, flow, and exit from the cityscape.

### **Ghostly Narratives**

Edo developed from a spiritually imbued geography, the outcome of a complex geomantic project that operated both to protect the city from evil and ensure the distribution and disposal of powerful supernatural energies. With its very foundations forged from occult practice, it should be unsurprising that this city became the site of all manner of supernatural narratives. From the ghostly to the monstrous, Edo was not only constructed from engagements with supernaturalism, but came to support and perpetuate stories of the strange and spectral. When the city was renamed Tokyo (‘East capital’) in 1868 by the newly reinstated Emperor Meiji, a new era of development, migration, and exchange began. As the city started to expand, many of the much older, existing settlements at its peripheries were swallowed up by rapid urban sprawl, and a new class of urban dwellers came to live in the capital. While Tokyo, and more generally Japan, was modernising, a renewed interest in old stories and folktales (*mukashi-banashi*) formed, and together with Western literary influences, Japanese ghost stories (*kaidan*) gained a new lease of life and even made their way to foreign audiences.

Cities are storied places where narratives interweave and interconnect to form the experiential spatialities through which we encounter urban space, a process whereby the division between history, memory, and imagination becomes increasingly less defined. Cities are always haunted: the historical narrative that ties Tokugawa Ieyasu and Tenkai to the spiritual construction of Edo-Tokyo is itself a revenant one. While the influence of *hōgaku* and *onmyōdo* in the spatial arrangement of Edo are historical fact, this account has been

manipulated through literary and folkloric (re)imaginings to shape experiences of modern Tokyo. Many Tokyo residents are aware of a story describing how Tenkai used a powerful symbol of *onmyōdo*, a five-pointed star or pentagram known as *gobōsei* (五芒星), which he apparently drew over a map of Edo to establish where the city's five protective temples should be built. Each of the shrines is supposedly dedicated to a particular direction, element, and colour (e.g., East, Fire, Red), and the eyes of their *Fudo* (a Japanese Buddhist deity of wrath and immovability) statues painted correspondingly. Given Tenkai's extended use of geomancy in the construction of Edo the story seems convincing, yet despite its plausibility the tale appears to be fictitious. Folklorist Zack Davisson writes on his blog, *Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai*, that the legend of the *Goshiki Fudo* ('Five Fudo Temples of Tokyo') does not seem to have come into circulation until sometime during the Meiji period (1868–1912) when it is said to have been used in the plot of a popular detective novel (Davisson 2015). More mysterious still is that neither the book's title nor its author is known, indicating a further spectral layer to this urban legend. Regardless of authenticity, Japanese tourists continue to try and navigate the occult mapping of Tokyo based on this story, and not wanting to disappoint visitors (or perhaps to supplement their income) priests managing temples associated with the legend have painted the eyes of their statues accordingly (Davisson 2015). When taken together with the collapsing of any meaningful boundaries between the actual-world and the imagined, the interweaving of literary, historical, and folkloric narratives demonstrate the workings of this urban interspatiality and its formation as an all-at-once sensed, imagined, and physical supernatural space.

In Kanda, an inner-city area northeast of the now ruined Edo castle, lies the centuries-old Shintō shrine of Kanda Myōjin. This sacred site is not only aligned to protect the city from the unlucky *kimon* direction but also enshrines the spirit of the infamous samurai warlord Taira-no-Masakado, whose vengeful ghost has continued to wreak havoc on Edo-Tokyoites since 940 CE, when Masakado's decapitated head allegedly flew to Edo from Kyōto following his execution. Masakado is celebrated for having rebelled against Japan's central government in the Heian period (794-1185 CE), before finally being defeated in battle by his cousin Taira no Sadamori. While for those living within the vicinity of Kanda Myōjin Masakado is regarded as a guardian and protector, in the nearby neighbourhood of Ōtemachi (directly east of the former Edo castle) his vengeful spirit is believed to have cursed the ground where his head was buried. The grave in Ōtemachi, which became known as *kubizuka* ('tomb of the head'), was originally one of the highest points in the area and would have overlooked Edo Bay. Due to centuries of

land reclamation the tomb is now deep within the city, at ground level, and surrounded by skyscrapers. These developments have not been without consequence. Since development of the area began in the early twentieth century, a number of accidents, catastrophes, and deaths have occurred, many of which have been attributed to the wrathful spirit of Masakado. However, the source of this *noroi* ('curse') lies not only in the disturbance of the ground, but also in political revisions that came to pass when the emperor was restored to power during the Meiji restoration (1868).

The restoration of imperial rule in Japan during the Meiji period (1868-1912) saw the end of Japan's feudal society, which had been established and presided over by the Tokugawa shogunate since the seventeenth century. Having long been celebrated as a hero for his rebellion against the imperial court, Masakado was now branded an enemy of the emperor and an enemy of the state, and his enshrinement as a deity at Kanda Myōjin was withdrawn (Friday 2007). The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 severely damaged *kubizuka* and so the opportunity was taken to excavate the burial mound, which still stood at around seven metres in height at that time. Ministry excavations failed to locate Masakado's head, and a temporary office building was constructed on the ground where the mound was located, which many believed to have enraged the spirit of Masakado as fourteen of the workers and government officials involved in the project mysteriously died in the two years following construction on the grave site (Friday 2007: 5). Karl Friday (2007) notes that 'the majority of the maladies involved the feet, lending credibility to gossip that blamed the victims for treading on Masakado's grave!' (5). By 1928, the building had been taken down, the land cleansed in an *ireisai* (pacification ritual), and *kubizuka* restored. However, as Friday goes on to state, the pacification rite did little to appease the angry spirit: an electrical storm in June 1940 – almost a thousand years to the day since Masakado's execution – saw lightning strike the Communication Ministry offices, causing a fire that burnt down nine government buildings (6). Further speculation about the negative energy of the site arose when the *kubizuka* miraculously escaped destruction in the allied bombing campaigns that devastated much of the surrounding area. When the American Occupation forces tried to bulldoze *kubizuka*, a machinery operator struck the foundation stone of the burial site; the bulldozer immediately overturned, crushing the driver (6). More recently, the economic downfall of Mitsui Finance Corporations has been linked to the company's plans to sell the mineral rights to land beneath the tomb (7). Jonathon Clements reported that Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, a banking company that owned a building overlooking the burial site, opened an account in the dead samurai's name as a means to pacify his ghost, while office workers

were instructed not to open windows facing the grave nor to turn their backs to it (Clements 2019). A series of further pacification rituals have been held at *kubizuka*, and for now, at least, Masakado's spirit appears to be at rest, while the curse narrative continues to affect the area.

Tokyo's physical landscape thus plays a significant role in generating supernatural narratives. Several large mounds and hills within the city and at its extremities are the focus of ghostly tales (*kaidan*), such as the site of Hachiōji-jō (Hachiōji Castle) ruins in West Tokyo. Like *kubizuka*, the ruins are associated with samurai, rebellion, and death, and similarly, these historical narratives have worked their way into the spectral geography of the city. Hachiōji-jō, the seat of the Hōjō clan, was destroyed by the Toyotomi army on the morning of June 23, 1590 CE. Most of the castle guards were slaughtered, and those who weren't, believing themselves to be doomed, committed suicide. Women, fearing what would happen to themselves and their children, climbed to the top of the nearby Goshuden Waterfall where they leapt to their deaths, taking their children with them. The waters of the Goshuden falls are said to have run red with blood for three days following the tragedy (Yoda and Alt 2012; chia 2017). Other women are said to have slit their own throats to avoid capture, while surviving retainers of the Hōjō clan's lord committed *seppuku*—ritual suicide by disembowelment—in the castle grounds. Believed to be haunted, Hachiōji-jō was abandoned for 316 years until finally being turned into a heritage site by the local authority. Yoda and Alt (2012) claim that on the anniversary of the battle the waterfall turns to blood, while on misty days visitors have reported screams, battle cries, horses braying, and described being attacked by invisible forces (106). Today, the ruins are regarded as one of the most haunted places in Tokyo, and many visitors leave offerings and flowers at the foot of the Goshuden Waterfall to appease the tormented spirits who dwell there.

Not only buildings constructed on vertiginous sites, but hills and slopes themselves find their way into Tokyo's supernatural narratives. Nogi-zaka (Nogi Slope), for example, is an extensive sloped road that bisects Aoyama cemetery, one of the largest municipal graveyards in the capital. Renamed after General Nogi Maresuke, a famed military leader who committed *seppuku* following the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912, the road was originally named *Yūrei-zaka*, literally 'ghost slope'. *Yūrei-zaka* were common throughout Edo, but many were renamed due to superstition: one such *yūrei-zaka* in Mita, a city in the inauspicious southwest of Tokyo, retains its name and is popular with paranormal investigators. Despite its renaming, Nogi-zaka continues to play its only role in the supernatural legacy of the city. Considered one of the most haunted places in Tokyo, Nogi-zaka consistently finds itself the site of ghostly narratives

describing phantom passengers and distressed spectres, many of which are recounted by Tokyo's taxi drivers, some of whom refuse to collect fares there after dark (Devlin 2018). As boundaries of sorts, slopes play an important role in Japanese folklore and are considered as liminal spaces leading from the world of the living to the realm of the dead (Komatsu 2017). As such, slopes and hills are frequently found in literary narratives of haunting associated with Tokyo. Natsuhiko Kyōgoku's *Ubume no natsu* (*The Summer of the Ubume*, (1994)), for example, features a disorienting Tokyo hill which literally causes the protagonist, Tatsumi Sekiguchi, to collapse. Kyōgoku names this slope *haka-no-machi memaizaka* (literally, 'Vertigo-slope of grave-town'), setting it in the Tokyo suburbs between a temple and a graveyard (close to the actual-world site of Zōshigaya Cemetery). Elsewhere, Lafcadio Hearn utilises Kii-no-kuni zaka in Yotsuya—also located in the unlucky southwest direction—as the setting for his ghostly tale 'Mujina' (Hearn 1904). 'Mujina' depicts the slope as an isolated site haunted by a magical raccoon dog, which transforms into faceless human-like figures to scare an unwitting merchant as he travels back to his home in the north of the city (traditionally considered a place for the congregation of spirits in Japanese folklore (Suzuki 2013)). Hearn weaves local folklore into his fictional narrative, writing the story as a tale recounted to him during his time in Japan. Interestingly, Hearn's story connects to an unassociated site in the west of Tokyo named *Mujina-zaka*; a steep flight of stone stairs that cuts through a bamboo grove. Locals in the area claim the slope to have gained its name after a farmer had been repeatedly haunted by a mujina while taking the uphill pathway back to his home in the village of Koganei. This coming together of historical, folkloric, and literary geographical narratives forms an 'interspatiality' (Hones 2022), a collapsing of spatial boundaries and the imbrication of Tokyo's experiential time-space: 'the frequency of such temporal overlaps, of ruptures and fissures in the spatio-temporal landscape of the city, is what privileges the urban environment as a haunted space' (Thurgill 2022: 15).

## Conclusions

The supernatural is all too often relegated to the realms of superstition and fantasy; as Derrida argues, '[a] traditional scholar does not believe in ghosts - nor in all that could be called the virtual space of spectrality' (1994: 12). When included in academic analysis, especially within the humanities, there is a tendency to evoke the language of haunting for purely figurative use (Edensor 2005, 2008; Till 2005; Wylie 2008). The historical traces of urban pasts

that are found in cities provide one way in which haunting manifests, rendered tangible as ‘spatialised remainders forming an aesthetic juxtastructure’ (Crang and Travlou 2001: 162). Yet, the supernatural often plays a more literal role in our experience of urban environments: lived spatialities where ‘the presence of something invisible, unheard, and unknown, and yet felt, is even more prevailing’ (Nabae 2013: 29). This paper has offered an alternative view of the supernatural city, one that looks to the very structure of the urban environment as the point where the magical, monstrous, and ghostly might emerge. A key point here is that, unlike Western traditions of imposing or over-layering supernatural narratives *onto* existing city spaces, Tokyo’s supernaturalism is in-built, present in the urban fabric, spatial organisation, and projected symbolism of the city from its moment of inception. Unlike ideas of Tokyo as a palimpsest (Sand 2013), this article does not engage with the vertical layering of history through which a city’s past might be observed. Instead, it demonstrates the co-existence, imbrication and oscillation of historical and contemporary narratives that work collaboratively to form the urban topography and inform our spatial experience.

Authors such as Hearn and Kyōgoku work to further blend the literary and the actual-world, combining physical locations, folklore, and history, often in a delineated, distanced manner that sees the planting of folkloric narratives in previously unassociated sites. The effect of such practice, when taken together with the history of the city, flattens the ontological divide between real and imagined, visible and invisible, literary and actual-world, resulting in Tokyo’s formation as a dynamic interspatiality. Examining literary and literal narratives of the supernatural, Tokyo has been framed as an intentionally numinous ‘interspatiality’ (Hones 2022), one whereby spirituality and geomantic imaginaries have been used in the physical construction and organisation of the city, and which have subsequently fed into the literary and folkloric narratives that have come to describe and affect experiential encounters with the urban environment. By tracing the narratives that combine and blend to produce and reproduce Tokyo as a supernatural city, it is possible to reveal the multi-coded, multi-spatial workings of the urban environment. In addition to the historical and folkloric, literary urban narratives show the *imagining* and *experiencing* of the city to be far from separated. Blurring literary-geographical boundaries, as well as socio-geographical borders, this ‘spectral interspatiality’ works to further ensure the spatial unification of the supernatural urban environment as it is lived, sensed, and experienced.

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